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Education Reform

Five Year Master Plan

On June 18, 1993 the Massachusetts Education Reform Act was signed into law. Within months of this historic occasion, the Board of Education approved the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Implementation Plan which translated the Education Reform Act into action. With its March, 1995 approval of the Five-Year Master Plan for Education, the Board extended the scope of Education Reform into the next century.

Below is an outline of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Five-Year Plan broken down into five goals each containing several initiatives. Each initiative highlights a different component of Education Reform and demonstrates how the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is supporting that initiative.

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Education Reform

Goals 2000 Five Year Master Plan

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Ensure All Students Achieve High Standards

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Goal 1: Ensure All Students Achieve High Standards

The focus of Goal One of the Five Year Plan is much the same as that of the first goal of the Education Reform Implementation Plan: student performance. In the final analysis, all aspects of the education system will be judged by their impact on this bottom line. If schools, districts, and the state can work together to create the conditions in which student performance improves, support for public education will grow.

Line-Item 1: Student Performance Standards and Accountability

Over the next five years, the Commonwealth will define standards for student performance, develop a system to authentically measure each student's achievement, and establish a system of accountability with high expectations for all students.

Initiative # 1: Common Core of Learning and Curriculum Frameworks

The first step in this process was taken in July 1994, when the Board of Education adopted the Massachusetts Common Core of Learning. The result of months of public participation from thousands of individuals, the Common Core articulates a statewide consensus of what all students should know and be able to do when they graduate from high school. In addition to the seminal role this document will play in all future Education Reform initiatives, the extensive public participation in the Core's development began the critical process of transforming the public's expectations for their schools.

Throughout the 1994-95 school year, Department staff are leading a broad-based, participatory process which will result in the second stage in this process: the development of challenging Curriculum Frameworks in the seven core academic areas. The Frameworks translate the broad vision of the Common Core into **three** important products, each of which will form the base for other critical initiatives:

1. **Content and Learning Standards** will describe in detail what students are expected to know and be able to do in each subject at the end of the 4th, 8th, 10th, and 12th grades. These standards will form the basis for the new statewide system of student assessment [see Initiative #2]. Throughout the standards in each subject area, a major emphasis will be placed on those interdisciplinary connections and higher order thinking skills articulated in the Common Core.
2. A common chapter on recommended **Teaching, Learning and Assessment Practices** will describe state-of-the-art pedagogical approaches that have been proven to be effective in teaching students the higher order thinking skills at the heart of the Learning Standards. Certification standards [see Initiative #9], professional performance standards [see Initiative #7], and the statewide professional development plan [see Initiative #13] will all focus on developing teachers' abilities to teach in this manner.
3. A common chapter on **Structuring Schools to Support Learning-Centered Classrooms** will outline principles on how a school should be constituted to create the conditions in which effective teaching and learning can flourish. The Department will assist schools in using these principles to develop comprehensive school improvement plans [see Initiative #24].

Initiative # 2: Statewide Standardized Assessment

By June, 1995, a contractor will be selected to work with Department staff and a series of constituent-based committees to develop a comprehensive assessment system based on the Common Core and Curriculum Frameworks to be administered to all students in grades 4, 8, and 10 (and potentially 12) [see Initiative #4]. The assessment system is expected to utilize open-ended questions that focus on the creative and critical thinking skills called for by the Common Core. Accommodations will be made for students with limited English ability and special needs to ensure that they will be able to participate in the assessment program as well.

Substantial resources will be devoted to the development of the assessment system. Once completed, the new assessment system will become the cornerstone to a high stakes system of accountability. All students will be required to exhibit competency on the 10th grade assessment in order to be eligible to receive a high school diploma. Schools will be evaluated based on the results of the assessment system as well [see Initiative #20].

The new assessment system will take several years to develop. During the 1995-96 school year, a trial test will be administered. Results of the trial will be reported at the school building and district levels only. The purpose of the trial will be to field-test the new assessment, to provide preliminary information to schools and districts about student performance in relation to the Curriculum Frameworks and Common Core, and to begin to establish baseline information to evaluate school and district performance [see Initiative #20]. The following year, individual student results will be reported for the first time. These results will be used to establish standards and a firm schedule for the implementation of the Competency Determination graduation requirement.

Initiative # 3: School-Based pK-12 Authentic Assessment

The new assessment will strive towards a goal of authenticity by incorporating essay, problem solving, and other open ended questions in place of multiple choice. There is, however, a limit to how authentic an assessment can be if it focuses on how a student performs at a single sitting. Other, more authentic, approaches to student assessment will utilize techniques such as interdisciplinary projects and student portfolios to measure the development of students' skills in real life situations over an extended period of time. While this approach is arguably a more accurate measure of higher order thinking skills, it is more difficult to standardize the results. Over the past three years, the Department has initiated three pilot projects to explore school-based, standardized authentic assessment: the New Standards Project, Harvard Education School's Project Zero, and the early childhood portfolio assessment system. Over the next few years, teachers' capacity to use these new assessment techniques will be expanded through a major statewide commitment to professional development activities linked to the Curriculum Frameworks [see Initiatives #1 and #13].

Initiative # 4: Certificate of Mastery and Higher Education Admission

Department staff will continue to work with staff from the Higher Education Coordinating Council, the School-to-Work Committee and participating college admission offices to coordinate college admission with state student standards and school-based standardized assessment. The goal will be to link college admissions to students' 12th grade assessment results in as many schools as possible by the Year 2000. A working committee will be established to determine when the school-based authentic assessment will be sufficiently standardized for this purpose and whether a 12th grade state-administered assessment will need to be added to Initiative #2.

Line-Item 2: Occupational Standards and Assessment

All students will be expected to develop the core skills and bodies of knowledge defined by the 10th grade Competency Determination. However, not all students will focus exclusively on academic proficiency. Some students, both college and non-college bound, will choose to concentrate more on developing job skills either through a comprehensive vocational program or by participating in a school-to-work program [see Initiative #29]. This plan also calls for the design of a performance-based system of accountability for these students.

Initiative # 5: Occupational Performance Standards

Over the next five years the Department will work with vocational schools, business leaders, the Mass Jobs Council, the School-to-Work Committee, and others to develop performance-based measurements and curriculum guidelines that integrate academic and vocational training to prepare students for the jobs of the future. Since all students will be expected to meet the 10th grade standards of the Competency Determination, these vocational standards will focus on the supplemental skills that students need to pursue their desired occupation. Students who demonstrate mastery based on these standards will receive a Certificate of Occupational Proficiency. Students who receive a Certificate of Occupational Proficiency will be strongly encouraged to pursue a Certificate of Mastery in academics as well.

Line-Item 3: Adult Basic Education Standards and Accountability

In keeping with the Board of Education's Adult Basic Education Mission Statement, the system of performance-based accountability will be extended to adult students.

Initiative # 6: Adult Basic Education Standards and Accountability

Department staff with experience in adult basic education have participated in the development of the Curriculum Frameworks to ensure that the Learning Standards are appropriate for adult learners. While some items in the state's new assessment system may need modification to be developmentally appropriate for adult learners, K-12 standards and assessment instruments will be used wherever possible. Although the standards and measurements of performance will be similar to those established for younger students [see Initiatives #1 & 2], a distinct set of teaching guidelines will be developed for use in programs serving adult learners.

When completed, the performance standards and instructional guidelines developed will be used by adult basic education providers [see Initiative #79], the Mass Jobs Council, the Department of Employment and Training, the Industrial Services, and the Department of Public Welfare.

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Education Reform

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Goal 2: Enhance the Quality and Professionalism of Teachers and Administrators

In recognition of the primary role that each teacher and administrator plays in improving student learning, this goal is placed second, directly following student performance. Like Goal One, this goal focuses on improving quality by establishing clear standards of performance. By the Year 2000, all educators will be challenged to meet these high standards of professionalism through new professional performance and certification standards and through ongoing professional development linked to recertification.

Line-Item 1: Professional Standards for Teachers

Just as the Common Core of Learning articulates a statewide consensus about what all students should know and be able to do, professional standards will be established articulating common expectations for teachers.

Initiative # 7: Teacher Performance Standards and Evaluation Guidelines

In December, 1994, the Board of Education voted its intent to establish baseline performance standards for all teachers. In doing so, the Board made it clear that, while school committees may establish additional standards through collective bargaining, all districts would be expected to include the state's standards as a minimum in all contracts.

When fully developed in the Spring of 1995, these standards will support the recommended teaching practices described in the Curriculum Frameworks and will include guidelines for comprehensive, performance-based teacher evaluations. Principals, teacher's union representatives, and other educational supervisors will be trained in the use of these evaluation guidelines to support professional performance and accountability [see Initiative #18].

Initiative # 8: Recognition of Distinguished Teachers

Teachers who exhibit exemplary professional performance will be recognized as distinguished teachers and should be encouraged and compensated to serve as mentors to pre-service and provisionally certified teachers [see Initiative #9]. Both private and public funding will be sought to identify distinguished teachers and acknowledge their exceptional professional performance. In doing so, Massachusetts will seek to become aligned with the work of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and other efforts that focus on enhancing the professionalism of teachers.

Line-Item 2: Teacher Preparation Programs

Over the next five years significant changes will occur in the Massachusetts system of teacher certification. Although the statute concerning teacher certification was changed dramatically through the Education Reform Act, teacher preparation programs have remained fundamentally the same. In essence, the system will shift from one which only emphasizes seat time as a measure of professional performance toward a true performance-based system that expects teacher preparation programs to add measurable value to each prospective teachers' professional skills. In many cases this may mean a shift of resources and responsibilities from institutions of higher education to school-based programs.

Initiative # 9: Teacher Certification System Development

Substantial work will be done over the next five years to put in place the components necessary to fulfill the statutory charge to create a performance-based certification system. The first step will be to integrate the professional preparation standards [see Initiative #7] and Curriculum Frameworks [see Initiative #1] with the existing regulations to establish clear performance standards for provisional and full certification.

The second step will be to define authentic assessments of professional performance for teachers at both the provisional and full level. The standards for provisional certification will focus on prospective teachers' content knowledge and will be closely linked to the learning standards of the Curriculum Frameworks. As such, a standardized assessment will most likely be used. Full certification will focus on pedagogy articulated in the Frameworks [see Initiative #1]. Assessment of professional performance will utilize such authentic evaluation instruments as peer evaluation and the presentation of a professional portfolio.

The final step will be to establish a system of support and training for prospective provisional and full certification candidates. Institutions of higher education will need to form cooperative relationships with participating schools to provide teachers with high quality professional internships and guidance. A system will be developed to compensate distinguished teachers [see Initiative #8] and other qualified educators who mentor prospective teachers. Where possible, schools will be encouraged to develop school- or district-based teacher training programs that meet the distinct needs of each school system.

Initiative # 10: Teacher Recruitment

Since the average Massachusetts teacher has over twenty years of experience, it is expected that a high percentage of the teachers currently employed in the Commonwealth will retire by the Year 2000. In order to recruit talented undergraduate and graduate students to fill this impending gap, the Executive Office of Education will administer a program called "Attracting Excellence to Teaching," which will provide financial incentives to teacher candidates ranking in the top of their class. Additional recruitment programs will be developed as well to attract teacher candidates for underserved subject areas and underrepresented segments of the population.

Initiative # 11: Certification Administration

One of the major responsibilities of the Department is to administer the system for certifying qualified educators. Over the next few years this system will continue to be substantially simplified, automated, and expedited. Since for many educators this process is their first introduction to the Department, it is especially important that they receive prompt, helpful service in the evaluation of their application.

Line-Item 3: Statewide Professional Development for Teachers

The success of Education Reform depends on substantial local, state, and federal resources devoted to high quality professional development linked to improving student learning. Public education is in the process of fundamental change. Teachers can not depend solely on textbooks and lectures to fulfill their roles as instructional leaders. They are expected to design and use cooperative, project-based, interdisciplinary curriculum units that integrate technology, the community, the work place, the state's Curriculum Frameworks, and an authentic system of assessment. Taken together, each component of this new vision for the classroom poses an enormous challenge to seasoned and novice teachers alike.

In this context, professional development will mean more than just taking classes at a local teacher training institution. Teachers need a supportive professional environment at the school site which nurtures new ideas, encourages innovation, and places a high priority on peer support. Teachers must have the time to investigate new approaches, the resources to access the state-of-the-art teaching practices, and the flexibility to regularly communicate and collaborate with fellow educators.

Each year the Department will develop a statewide plan for professional development which will clearly identify priorities, resources, and a detailed action plan for linking state initiatives to district, building, and individual educator professional development plans. Over the next four years, the top priority of all teachers' professional development plans should be the implementation of the Curriculum Frameworks and assessment. Most state professional development resources will be targeted towards that end. In addition to this primary focus, a statewide network of professional development providers will be approved by the state for educators and districts to contract with for additional professional development services. Although the state will devote significant attention and resources to professional development, the responsibility to design and pursue professional development is local, shared by each educator and his or her school district.

Initiative # 12: Recertification Guidelines and System Development

Recertification is the engine that drives professional development, but it does not direct educators how to fulfill their professional development requirements. The recertification regulations approved by the Board in December, 1994, require all teachers to engage in at least 120 hours of professional development every five years with at least half of those hours spent on activities specifically connected with their primary area of certification. This approach assumes that the vast majority of teachers are responsible professionals capable of managing their own professional growth.

Initiative # 13: Curriculum Frameworks Professional Development

Over the next four years, the state will provide substantial support to school districts' implementation of the Curriculum Frameworks [see Initiative #1]. Beginning in the summer of 1995, Department staff will lead a comprehensive statewide initiative consisting of summer institutes, intensive training for curriculum specialists, distribution of resource guides, MCET broadcasts [see Initiative #69], seminars, workshops, in-service events, grants to districts, and other activities. The goal of this work will be to prepare all 60,000 teachers in the use of the Curriculum Frameworks.

Initiative # 14: Professional Development Providers Network

In 1994-95, the Department developed a process for registering professional development offerings. This information will be made available through resource guides and the Mass EdOnline LearnNet [see Initiative #71]. Teachers and schools will use this information to choose providers who best meet their specific needs. In addition, over the next few years, the Department will begin to increasingly evaluate provider performance and approve only those providers who meet high standards of quality.

Line-Item 4: Professional Standards, Preparation, and Development for Education Administrators

While some aspects of the teachers' systems of performance standards, certification, and professional development can be applied to education administrators as well, many new systems will need to be developed to meet the distinct needs of educational administrators. Administrators must be supported, encouraged, and required to exhibit strong fiscal, managerial, and planning skills in addition to educational expertise. They must demonstrate leadership and collegiality to assist teachers in creating the conditions in which students can best learn.

The changes begun by Education Reform will especially impact principals. Unprecedented authority and responsibility has been granted to them to give both the flexibility to pursue educational excellence and the accountability for their school's success. Principals should be given support so that they can proactively manage the change process through relevant opportunities for professional development and

collaboration. They will be called upon to engage in a rich dialogue with their teachers, students, and the community about how to develop and implement an effective system of school improvement [see Initiative #24]. Schools will be expected to make steady progress towards the state standard of school performance [see Initiative #20]. Principals are accountable for the performance of their schools. If a school is declared "chronically" underperforming, "the state will replace the principal with a state receiver" [see Initiative #25], who will have expanded authority to implement a school improvement plan.

Initiative # 15: Administrative Performance Standards and Evaluation Guidelines

State standards are currently being developed to articulate the skills educational administrators need to fulfill their new roles. Like those for teachers [see Initiative #7], the administrative performance standards established by the Board of Education will form a base for all local employment contracts and will include guidelines for how each administrator should be evaluated.

Initiative # 16: Recognition of Distinguished Administrators

Distinguished Administrators will be acknowledged in much the same way as Distinguished Teachers [see Initiative #8]. Based on the state standards, Distinguished Administrators will be selected to work with their peers and lead state sponsored events.

Initiative # 17: Administrator Recruitment and Certification

While it is essential that administrators be well versed in pedagogy, the skills they should develop for certification should be related as much to management as to direct instruction. This distinction calls for a different type of training for administrators than teachers. Beginning in FY'96, the Department will lead a two-year study to develop a new performance-based system of certification for administrators. Candidates for this new system will be recruited from diverse socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. In addition to teachers, lawyers, social workers, business people and others will be encouraged to enter the educational field as administrators.

Initiative # 18: Professional Development for Administrators

Administrators must embody the ideal of "life-long learners" if they are to keep up-to-date with the rapid pace of reforms. The state will do its best to provide administrators with ongoing institutes, workshops, and other resources to connect them with the state-of-the-art. Additional resources will be made available to contract with approved providers [see Initiative #14] for contracted consulting or training services.

Line-Item 5: Early Retirement Incentives

Initiative # 19

A two-year system of early retirement incentives for teachers and administrators was enacted as part of the Education Reform Act. . Approximately 850 educators took advantage of this program each of the first two years. No additional educators will receive this incentive, but the state is obligated to pay its share of the cost for the next five years.

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Education Reform

Goals 2000 Five Year Master Plan

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Goal 3: Support Accountability and Improvement in all Schools

Goal Three extends the system of performance standards and accountability to the school and district levels. As with the first two goals, Goal Three begins with a broad-based participatory process to define measurable standards of performance. Because these standards will rely heavily upon the student assessment system still under development [see Initiative #2], much of the initial work remains to be done. Once established, the standards will identify a common unit of measurement to evaluate school performance. The results of this annual evaluation will be published in school profiles which will provide vital feedback to parents, community members, school personnel, policy leaders, and the media, about the progress each school is making.

Schools and districts that fail to make consistent progress towards the state standards will be declared "underperforming" and receive addition assistance in developing and implementing improvement plans. If, after two years, progress is not made towards the performance standard, the state will appoint a receiver who will have expanded authority to implement proven practices.

The state will assist all schools and districts in generating comprehensive School Improvement Plans using the information in the school profiles to focus on continuous improvement. Districts with approved Improvement Plans may be eligible to receive additional state and federal funding and program flexibility. In order for a school or district to have its plan approved, it must show a strategic plan that links key elements to improving student learning.

Line-Item 1: School and District Performance Standards

The state is responsible for evaluating school and district performance for all publicly funded educational service providers. In addition to traditionally constituted K-12 public schools and districts, the Board and Department are responsible for setting standards and evaluating charter schools, early childhood education programs, adult basic education programs, county agricultural schools, and some private special education programs.

Initiative # 20: School and District Standards and Evaluations

The single most important indicator of school performance will be the state student assessment results [see Initiative #2]. School performance standards will be developed for students' aggregate results, performance stratification, and at-risk sub-groups. In addition, standards will be developed for such important indicators as attendance, graduation rates, and school safety.

Initiative # 21: School Profiles

Parents, community members, the media, and political leaders will be able to evaluate schools and districts based on the same information that the state uses. They will get this information through the new school profiles. These profiles will be designed to make relevant data collected from schools on their performance on all key indicators accessible.

Initiative # 22: Early Childhood Education Program Standards and Evaluations

Over the next five years the Commonwealth will work with local agencies to continue building a statewide infrastructure of early childhood education providers [see Initiative #75]. As with all other publicly funded education providers, performance standards will be defined to hold early childhood education programs accountable. However, since young children's academic performance cannot be reliably assessed, the Department will develop an evaluation system that relies more heavily on program components.

Initiative # 23: Adult Basic Education Program Standards and Evaluations

As the statewide system of adult basic education providers is established, it will be essential that all such providers participate in regular evaluations. Department staff will work with other related state agencies and the Board of Education's Adult Education Advisory Council to develop and implement this system.

Line-Item 2: School and District Improvement Plans

Initiative # 24

During the 1994-95 school year, the Commonwealth used Goals 2000 funding to pilot comprehensive District Improvement Planning in seven districts. Over the next four years a major focus of resources and attention will be placed on supporting all schools and districts in developing and implementing comprehensive Improvement Plans.

Beginning in the summer of 1995, the Department will convene summer institutes for District Change Teams. Each district will be encouraged to put together a team that includes the superintendent, school committee chair, teachers' union president, principals, and school council co-chairs. This team will participate in workshops on all aspects of the Education Reform Act and the three new federal programs (the Improving America's Schools Act, School-to-Work, and Goals 2000). After a common base of information is established, Teams will be exposed to various systemic change models such as Project PALMS [see Initiative #27], the Coalition of Essential Schools, Harvard's Project Zero, the Carnegie Turing Points project, and the Accelerated Schools project. Before they leave the institute, Teams will be expected to develop an action plan to involve the district's school councils and school committee in the development of comprehensive Improvement Plans. Improvement Plans should address the following elements:

Improved Student Performance

- Bilingual Education
- Community Service Learning
- Drop-Out Prevention
- Elimination of "General Track"
- Gifted and Talented Programs
- School-to-Work
- Special Education

Improved Teacher Effectiveness

- Adult Resource Ratio
- Professional Development

Improved School Effectiveness

- Business and Community Partnerships
- Educational Technology
- Integration of Federal Programs
- Parent Involvement and Education
- School Structure
- Student Learning Time
- School-Based Management
- School Based Services

Over the 1995-96 school year, Department staff will work with selected consultants and school change coaches to support schools and districts in developing their Improvement Plans. Beginning the following year (1996-97), the Department will begin to coordinate relevant grant programs into unified block grants (seeking federal waivers where necessary) for all districts with approved Improvement Plans. This strategy of simplifying the grant process to support comprehensive improvement plans is closely aligned with the Federal Goals 2000 and Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) initiatives.

Line-Item 3: Model and Underperforming Schools and Districts

Initiative # 25: Exemplary Schools and Districts

Schools and districts that consistently evidence high performance will be recognized as Exemplary Schools or Districts and will receive additional resources to assist other schools in implementing successful practices.

Initiative # 26: Underperforming Schools and Districts

Once the new school and district standards and assessment system are in place [see Initiative #20], the Department will begin an annual evaluation of schools and districts. Those that do not meet the established standards will be declared "underperforming" and will be eligible for two years of additional technical assistance from the Department. In developing a targeted assistance program, the Department will draw on

the best practices and strategies utilized by schools and districts in developing improvement plans.

After two years of assistance, underperforming schools and districts that fail to make consistent progress towards to the state standards will be declared "chronically underperforming" and have a state receiver appointed. Receivers will have enhanced authority to hire and fire personnel and move forward on a solid improvement plan.

Line-Item 4: Project PALMS

Initiative # 27

In 1992, the Commonwealth was awarded a five year, \$10 million matching grant from the National Science Foundation to support statewide systemic change in math, science and technology. The innovations initiated by Project PALMS (Partnership for the Advancement of Learning Mathematics and Science) have paved the way for many of the essential components of the Education Reform Act.

During the first two years of the grant, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education established partnerships between participating school districts, businesses, museums, and adult literacy centers to investigate best teaching practices and to develop student content and learning standards. The resulting Curriculum Frameworks in math, science and technology have served as a model for the other five Massachusetts Frameworks [see Initiative #1] and curriculum frameworks in other states across the nation.

Now in its third year, PALMS has moved into its next stage of work, integrating existing efforts with other Department initiatives, building regional capacity to "scale-up" reforms from the initial model sites, and continuing to pilot state-of-the-art educational practices. During its final two years, PALMS will focus on making its reforms truly systemic by integrating its work with state, regional, and district programs. By the fifth year, all PALMS activities will either be integrated into other programs or consolidated into a state center for math and science.

Line-Item 5: Dual Enrollment for High School Students

Initiative # 28

One goal of Education Reform is to make the Commonwealth's schools academically challenging to all students. Nonetheless, some high school students who have essentially completed the curricular offerings can best be served by college-level courses. To address this need, the Executive Office of Education, in conjunction with the Higher Education Coordinating Council, has developed a system in which the state will pay for tuition for qualified students to take classes at a state or community college.

Line-Item 6: School-to-Work

Initiative # 29: School-to Work Programs

Massachusetts received one of eight Federal five-year grants to help build a state School-to-Work system. The system will be established with a focus on all students. Programs developed in the system will integrate academic and vocational instruction, academic and work-based instruction, and secondary and post-secondary education. Some of the essential elements of School-to-Work are introduction to career development in K-8, involvement of all secondary students in broad career clusters, and workplace experiences that could lead to the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency [see Initiative #5]. Students in School-to-Work programs will develop skills and occupational proficiencies addressed in the Curriculum Frameworks and the Common Core of Learning [see Initiative #1].

Initiative # 30: Vocational-Technical School Restructuring

Between 1995 and 1998, the state will assist vocational-technical schools in restructuring their curriculum to respond to the requirements of the new workplace, the Education Reform Act, and the School-to-Work initiative.

Initiative # 31: Mass Transition Initiative

In 1992 the Department was awarded a five year "systemic change grant" of \$438,000 per year from the U.S. Department of Education. The purpose of the grant was to establish the Massachusetts Transition Initiative (MTI), a grant program that provides school districts across the state with technical support and funds to implement effective transition planning for students with disabilities from school to adult life. In the first three years the program has grown from 18 high schools to over 75 in 1995.

Line-Item 7: Citizenship Education

There is no substitute for first-hand experience to teach students about the responsibilities of citizenship called for in the Common Core of Learning [see Initiative #1]. The state will continue to play a role in assisting schools in providing students with these experiences by supporting statewide networks for community service and democratic participation. The challenge is to make the experiences real and meaningful while connecting them with the school curriculum. Although many of the experiences take place outside of the school building, their importance is inherently curricular, not extra-curricular.

Initiative # 32: Community Service Learning

Over the last few years, the state and federal governments have supported schools in introducing meaningful community service learning experiences to their curriculum. These programs combine the best examples of project-based curriculum with a specific focus on community involvement. By connecting students with their local community, these programs will help to develop positive civic habits.

Initiative # 33: Student Leadership and Participation

For over twenty years, Massachusetts has been the only state in the union to provide students with elected representation on its State Board of Education. By law, every high school elects two students to one of eleven regional councils. In addition to monthly meetings and leadership training, each regional council elects four students to the State Student Advisory Council. The forty-four members of the State Council work with Department staff on legislation and other important educational issues. Students from the Student Advisory Council have participated as active members of the Commission on the Common Core of Learning, the Commission on Time and Learning, the seven Curriculum Frameworks Advisory Committees, and other educational committees. The chair of the state council serves as a full voting member of the State Board of Education.

The challenge over the next five years will be to expand the impact of the student advisory experience beyond the 700 students who participate on state and regional councils. Efforts will be made to better connect the student advisory council with local school councils and school committees as well as with statewide programs such as the Hugh O'Brien Youth Leadership Foundation, Student Government Day and other related programs and to work with MCET to use telecommunications technologies [see Initiatives #72 & 73] to increase the number of students who can participate in these programs.

Line-Item 8: Safe and Healthy Schools

In the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's 1993 Youth Risk Behavior survey, one in twenty Massachusetts students reported not

going to school in the last thirty days because they did not feel safe at or on their way to school. In the same survey, one quarter of all high school students reported having sex before age 14 and over 6% reported having either been pregnant or caused a pregnancy during high school.

Schools can create a positive learning environment only if students feel safe and healthy. The state will support several programs to assist schools in establishing a safe and healthy environment in which learning can flourish.

Initiative # 34: Comprehensive Health Education

In November, 1992 Massachusetts voters approved a \$.25 increase in the excise tax placed on all tobacco products, earmarked for an anti-smoking public information campaign and school-based comprehensive health education programs. These funds substantially augment existing federal Drug Free Schools Grants in supporting schools' efforts to increase healthy behavior. In the Fall of 1994, an independent evaluation by the Boston University School of Public Health showed positive results in reducing student risk behaviors as a direct result of the programs instituted by schools funding through the Comprehensive Health Protection grants. Added to this effort will be the soon-to-be released Comprehensive Health Education Curriculum Framework [see Initiative #1].

Initiative # 35: Safe and Violence-Free Schools

One in five Massachusetts high school students have reported carrying a weapon in the last thirty days. Half that number brought their weapon to school.

Standards for school safety will be developed as part of the school performance standards. Schools will be assisted in improving the relative safety of their environment through a series of planning grants, state programs, and program grants. Successful programs will continue to be identified and expanded.

Initiative # 36: Educational Alternatives for Chronically Disruptive Students

One of the most important things that schools, districts, and the state can do to increase the general safety and health of each school is to find alternatives for students who are not well served by the normal school approach. For the most disruptive of students, this may mean requiring the student to attend a school that focuses on their unique needs. Most schools are not prepared to focus adequate attention on these students. Those that do, frequently find that the drain of attention that these few students require makes it difficult to balance the needs of other students as well.

Initiative # 37: After School Programs

As part of each school and district's improvement plan [see Initiative #24], all school should attempt to make full use of their facilities. Pilot programs will be supported to encourage schools to develop after-school programs.

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Education Reform

Goals 2000 Five Year Master Plan

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- Initiative #56: Enrollment Projections and Facility Planning

Line-Item 8: Racial Balance Programs

- Initiative #57: Equal Education Improvement Grants
- Initiative #58: METCO
- Initiative #59: Magnet Education Grants

Goal 4: Streamline and Ensure Compliance with All State and Federal Regulations and Laws

Over the next five years, as performance standards are established for students, educators, schools and school districts, the necessity of mandating programmatic inputs will become less important. Schools that evidence sufficiently high performance may not need to meet strict regulations concerning such areas as school spending or transportation. Nonetheless, there do exist a set of requirements for which state and/or federal requirements will remain in place for the foreseeable future.

Goal Four seeks to coordinate all state and federal regulations and requirements into a single integrated process. These so-called "Opportunity-to-Learn Standards" address programmatic imperatives that the state or federal government have determined to be so universally important that they should be applied to all schools.

Over the next two years, the Department will conduct a comprehensive review of all relevant state and federal requirements to simplify, clarify, coordinate, and where appropriate eliminate regulations. The Commonwealth will seek federal waivers and pursue "Ed Flex" status from the United States Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to further streamline unnecessary regulations. Data collection, program quality review, audits, and compliance enforcement will also be coordinated into a single integrated system. The Department will assist schools in meeting all aspects of these regulations with grants, technical assistance, workshops, and other resources.

Schools and school districts with approved plans [see Initiative #24] and satisfactory performance [see Initiative #20] will be eligible to receive further regulatory relief. As part of the Commonwealth's Ed Flex application, the state will apply for the authority to lift all regulations (except those tied to safety, health, or students' rights) from schools and districts that are proceeding on approved improvement plans.

Line-Item 1: Opportunity-to- Learn Standards (OTL) Regulations, and Compliance

Initiative # 38:

The first step towards the development of integrated requirements, will be to establish unified Opportunity-to-Learn (OTL) Standards. Over the next eighteen months, staff from the Executive Office of Education and Department of Education will work with the Board of Education and Commission on Regulatory Relief to conduct a comprehensive review of all state and federal laws and regulations. In addition, Massachusetts will apply to the USDE to be designated as one of six pilot "Ed-Flex" states to further reduce the regulatory environment. The result of this process will be a single, integrated document that clearly articulates the minimum standards that all schools and districts are expected to meet to remain in compliance with the law. OTL Standards will establish uniform, minimum requirements in such areas as:

- Bilingual Education
- Civil Rights
- Early Childhood Education
- Enrollment
- Net School Spending
- Personnel
- School Administration
- Transportation
- Student Learning Time
- School Facilities
- School Nutrition and Health
- Students' Rights
- Special Education

Next, a coordinated system will be developed using technology to establish a single, streamlined system of OTL data collection and reporting, fully integrated with the broader Mass EdOnline plan. Audits, program quality review, complaint resolution, and compliance enforcement will also be coordinated into integrated systems.

The objectives of this process will be to: 1) restrict OTL Standards to those areas which are critical to improving student learning; 2) communicate these standards in a clear and concise manner; 3) simplify the process by which the state ensures that schools comply with these standards; and 4) work with school districts to ensure that all schools comply with the standards.

Line-Item 2: Foundation Aid (Chapter 70)

Initiative # 39

While the intention is to integrate school finance administration with other OTL Standards, the complexities and importance of this process require a distinct focus. In addition to generating clear expectations and projections for net school spending and state aid, Department staff will work with school districts to oversee the administration of tuition transfers for school choice and charter schools.

Line-Item 3: Special Education Reimbursements

In addition to the Foundation Budget, funds are distributed to schools to fulfill certain other state requirements:

Initiative # 40: Special Education Residential Placements (50% Reimbursements)

School districts with students with disabilities that require residential placements are eligible for 50% reimbursement for the costs of such students' programs.

Initiative # 41: Private Special Education for State Wards

Subject to appropriations, the state funds the full tuition costs for abandoned children and other wards of the state who are placed in private day or residential special education schools.

Initiative # 42: Special Education Reimbursements for State Wards

For the past two years, the state has provided additional assistance to all school districts that educate state wards. However, since these communities can count these students towards the calculation of their Foundation Budget, in future years these funds will be targeted to reimburse those additional special education expenses the district may incur beyond the assumptions of the Foundation Budget.

Initiative # 43: Special Education for Students in Institutional Schools

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education oversees the administration of special education services for over 2000 students currently residing in over sixty institutional settings. The Department coordinates these services with other agencies such as the Department of Youth Services, County Houses of Corrections and the Department of Public Health.

Line-Item 4: Special Assistance

One of the major innovations of Education Reform is the consolidation of numerous special assistance programs into the Foundation Budget. Although some special assistance programs may always be necessary to meet special circumstances not addressed by the Foundation Budget system, all efforts will be made to minimize the number of these programs.

Initiative # 44: Foundation Budget Special Assistance

No public policy formula, no matter how complex, can accommodate every situation. The Foundation Budget is no different. In order to accommodate unique circumstances (such as the impact of the Fort Devens closure on neighboring schools) up to 5% of each year's new Foundation Budget allocation will be held back from the general formula distribution. These funds will be distributed by the Board of Education to assist school districts unfairly burdened by the Foundation Budget formula. An approval system for these grants will be established with the Legislature and the Governor.

Initiative # 45: Charter School Start-Up Grants

In FY'95, Goals 2000 funds were used to provide planning grants to fourteen charter schools. In FY'96, an initial grant is being provided to each of the fourteen initial charter schools to assist them in opening their doors in September. Additional supplemental funds may also be distributed in future years.

Initiative # 46: WPI Math and Science Academy

For several years, the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) has engaged in a cooperative relationship with area schools to bring together local teachers with gifted and talented students in a special academy. By combining a professional development institute with an alternative school focused on a specific target group of students, the WPI Academy provides a model for both professional development and charter schools.

Initiative # 47: Temporary Food Assistance

The state has appropriated administrative funds for the operation of a food assistance program similar to the federal Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). The need for this appropriation arose out of a severe reduction in the federal program.

Line-Item 5: Transportation Reimbursements

Initiative # 48: General Transportation Reimbursement

In general, school districts must provide transportation only for students grades K-6 who live more than 2 miles from a school. School districts are eligible for state reimbursement for the costs associated with: 1) transportation of students over 1.5 miles; 2) transportation of students with special needs as called for in their individual education plan; and 3) transportation of students called for by a state approved bilingual education plan or racial balance plan [see Initiatives #55-57]. Private schools are also eligible for reimbursement of transportation costs.

Initiative # 49: Regional Transportation Reimbursement

Although regional school districts are eligible for full reimbursement for all transportation costs, the actual level of reimbursement is prorated according to the annual state appropriation.

Initiative # 50: School Choice Transportation Reimbursements

As called for by the Education Reform Act, for the first two years of implementation of statewide school choice, the so-called "sending" districts were eligible for partial reimbursement for the funds they lost when tuition costs were transferred to receiving districts. Beginning in FY'96, sending districts are no longer eligible for tuition reimbursement. Transportation costs associated with school choice will be reimbursed either to the providing school district at 150% of average pupil transportation costs or directly to the parents at \$.28 per mile.

Line-Item 6: Child Nutrition Programs

Initiative # 51

The Child Nutrition Program overseen by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education supports schools in administering the following seven programs: 1) School Breakfast; 2) School Lunch; 3) Special Milk; 4) Child and Adult Care Food; 5) Summer Food Service; 6) Food Distribution; and 7) Nutrition Education and Training. Since 1992, the Department has administered the School Food Service Outreach Campaign.

Line-Item 7: School Building Assistance

In 1948 the Commonwealth enacted Chapter 645, the School Building Assistance Act. In decades that have followed, the state has assisted over a thousand school construction or renovation projects. Each year the state authorizes a particular level of spending to be appropriated the following year. The annual appropriation pays the first year of the bonded amount. All subsequent payments are made out of total debt service account.

Initiative # 52: School Building Assistance (Desegregation Projects)

In 1991, the School Building Assistance Act was amended to place desegregation related projects into a separate fund. The highest priority for SBA funding goes to those projects related to state approved desegregation plans [see Initiative #56]. In addition to rising to the top of the funding list, these projects are eligible for the maximum reimbursement level, 90%. Over the last three years since desegregation projects were placed in a separate account, the state has fully funded all such approved projects. Twenty new projects are expected to be filed for FY'96 that would need to be authorized the following year.

Initiative # 53: School Building Assistance (Non-Desegregation Projects)

School districts that do not have a state approved desegregation plan are eligible for reimbursement on a sliding scale for all new construction and major renovation projects. New construction receives higher priority than major renovations. For the past several years, approved projects have had their position "frozen" in relationship to other projects and funded a year or two later. A substantial increase in annual authorization will be needed to keep pace with the growing demand for new schools. Over fifty projects are currently on the approved priority list and an additional hundred are expected to be filed soon. The existing demands on the program have already made funding of major renovation projects increasingly unrealistic. The impact of technology, new teaching styles, and the emergence of the school's role as a human service center will further challenge this system.

Initiative # 54: School Building Assistance - Annual Debt Service

The annual debt service for those SBA projects currently receiving state reimbursements is over \$150,000,000. If the state expands the program to keep pace with the growing demand, this annual liability is expected to grow to over \$200,000,000 by the Year 2000.

Initiative # 55: School Building Assistance - Emergency Projects

In addition to the general SBA process, separate funds are reserved for special assistance for emergency projects.

Initiative # 56: Enrollment Projections and Facility Planning

Over the next five years the Commonwealth will become more proactive in planning and prioritizing SBA funds. In 1994, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education conducted an initial statewide survey of school facilities. The results of that survey will be integrated with statewide enrollment projections to develop a comprehensive state plan.

Line-Item 8: Racial Balance Programs

In 1965, in response to the Willis-Harrington Report, the state enacted the Racial Balance Act. That Act established the state's responsibilities to hold

school committees accountable for intra-district racial balance. The Act established a state standard in which any district with a school or schools with over 51% minority students would be required to file a racial balance plan for State Board of Education approval. In 1974 the Act was amended to create three distinct programs: Section One established Equal Education Improvement Grants to districts with state Board approved desegregation plans. Section Seven established state funding for METCO in Boston and Springfield. Section Eight established Magnet School Grants for communities who are planning or beginning to implement a racial balance plan. More recently, an additional incentive was added for schools to file racial balance plans by increasing the reimbursement rate for school construction projects included in approved plans.

Over the next five years, in light of Education Reform, the state will need to define a new role for itself to advance this agenda. During the 1995-96 school year, the Department will undertake a comprehensive review of the METCO program and develop a long-range plan for racial balance.

Initiative # 57: Equal Education Improvement Grants

School districts with state approved racial balance plans are eligible to receive Equal Education Improvement Grants to increase racial balance and improve student learning for minority students.

Initiative # 58: METCO

For twenty years the state has supported the METCO program by providing funds to participating school districts that accept minority students from Boston or Springfield. While the program has had many successes, the new context established by the Education Reform Act creates the need for a comprehensive review of the program's objectives, administration, and future. Specifically, the introduction of statewide school choice has exacerbated racial imbalance in some communities and created inequities in the METCO funding mechanism.

In 1994 the Board of Education voted to conduct a comprehensive review of METCO and requested the Commissioner to develop recommendations for a new statewide policy on racial balance. This review will focus on both the management and implementation of METCO and its relation to other Education Reform initiatives.

Initiative # 59: Magnet Education Grants

School districts that are planning or beginning to implement a racial balance plan are eligible to apply for Magnet Education Grants. These funds can be used to develop the district's desegregation plan or to fund magnet programs that are part of the approved plan. More recently, these grants are now used to fund parent education centers for those districts that use an intra-district controlled choice plan as part of their racial balance plan.

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Education Reform

Goals 2000 Five Year Master Plan

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Create a Statewide Infrastructure of Support for Schools

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- Initiative #63: Consolidated Grant Administration
- Initiative #75: ESE Information Management and Technology [funded in Line-Item 5.4]

Line-Item 2: Communications and Public Outreach

- Initiative #64: Communication and Public Information
- Initiative #65: Document Approval, Reproduction, and Distribution
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- Initiative #74: Educational Technology Evaluation and Procurement
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- Initiative #77: Family Support Network
- Initiative #78: School-Linked Services
- Initiative #79: Basic Education Services for Parents
- Initiative #80: Parent Information Centers

Goal 5: Create A Statewide Support Structure for Schools

The fifth goal of this Plan focuses on the statewide infrastructure of support that will be needed to implement the other four goals. Whereas the final goal of the Implementation Plan focused exclusively on the Department's internal capacity to implement Education Reform, this goal coordinates relevant components of the planning, communications, and internal operations of Executive Office of Education and of the Massachusetts Corporation for Educational Telecommunications as well other state agencies.

Line-Item 1: Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Operations

While the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's overarching mission is to improve student learning, its role is not to achieve this mission directly. The Department's role is, in essence, to create the conditions for schools to create the conditions for teachers to create conditions for students learn.

Initiative # 60: Planning, Policy Development, and Resource Allocation

Massachusetts public education must be coordinated by a single agenda and decision-making structure. The Commonwealth can no longer afford to fragment this process among various agencies and oversight boards. By filing this Plan with the United States Department of Education as the Massachusetts Goals 2000 State Improvement Plan, the Board of Education is establishing a common framework for policy coordination.

The annual process of implementing, analyzing, reporting, and updating this Plan will provide a process for coordinating all state education-related initiatives. While broad-based participation will be sought from many other individuals and groups throughout this process, the Board of Education will have overall oversight responsibility for the implementation of this work. All major items of education policy with implications for this Plan, will be presented by the Commissioner of Education to the Board of Education. The Board may not have direct authority over every matter, but should be involved in reviewing all statewide policies that impact K-12 education.

Each year, this Plan will be updated and projected an additional year into the future. In addition, each year a detailed Implementation Plan and budget will be developed by the Commissioner and presented to the Board of Education for approval. By developing a common budget process,

ESE, EOE, MCET, and others will better coordinate related projects and more easily prioritize resources between agencies. The annual Implementation Plan will serve as a blueprint to direct ESE, EOE, and MCET actions as well establishing a standard of performance by which to measure the three agencies.

As an extension to this new budgeting system, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is in the process of transforming its internal budget to a zero-based system in which all programs are allotted resources based on their annual objectives. This approach will facilitate the process of reallocating resources from old priorities to new.

Initiative # 61: ESE Staffing, Management, and Operations

In the five years prior to the passage of the Education Reform Act, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education went through the first stage of a massive restructuring which resulted in the closing of all five regional centers and the reduction of over 50% of all state positions.

During the first two years of Education Reform implementation the Department engaged in a second stage of this transition, reorganizing the Department's administrative structure, prioritizing its focus towards the implementation of the Education Reform Act.

Not only has the Department recently changed its focus and organizational structure, the Department moved its entire facility from Quincy to Malden and began re-engineering every aspect of its operations. This process will continuously change over the next five years as new technologies and systems are integrated into the Department's operations.

Initiative # 62: Staff Development

As with school personnel, the majority of Department staff are expected to do fundamentally different work today than they did five years ago. Over the next five years, the Department will model the assumptions of the Foundation Budget by devoting approximately 3% of its personnel budget to professional development for its staff.

Initiative # 63: Consolidated Grant Administration

During the 1993-94 school year, the Department took a major step forward in coordinating all state and federal grants administration into a single integrated system. Over the next few years the Department will continue to simplify and coordinate this system. By the 1996-97 school year, the Department will take the next major step in this process by collapsing all available grants into integrated school improvement grants for those schools districts with approved plans.

Initiative # 75: ESE Information Management and Technology [funded in Line-Item 5.4]

In order to manage the extensive data collection, analysis, and reporting requirements of Education Reform, it is essential that the Department integrate the use of emerging technologies into all of its work. The student assessment system alone [see Initiative #2] creates the need for a distributed relational data base with over a million records. Certification, school performance profiles, and Opportunity-to-Learn reports will add additional requirements.

Throughout this work, the Department will fully coordinate its systems with the implementation of the Mass EdOnline plan [see Initiative #70].

Line-Item 2: Communications and Public Outreach

Education Reform requires a sustained statewide support from educators, parents, community leaders, and public policy makers. A recent statewide survey by Mass Insight found that less than a third of the public have heard of the Education Reform Act. When the main components of the Act were described, the vast majority expressed strong support.

Initiative # 64: Communication and Public Information

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and Executive Office of Education have both initiated aggressive public relations campaigns around key initiatives.

In January, 1994, for example, as part of a public input campaign corresponding to the development of the Common Core of Learning [see Initiative #1], the Department distributed over 50,000 pamphlets and 5,000 videos to every school and school district. Eight months later, when the Common Core was completed, the Department posted subway and billboards about the Core and distributed 60,000 packets to every teacher in the state, each of which included a fold-together version of the Core, a pamphlet version, and a newsprint version for every elementary and middle school student. Simultaneously, billboards.

Although major campaigns have been conducted for other initiatives as well, even more will need to be done over the next five years if the majority of the public is to become informed and involved.

Initiative # 65: Document Approval, Reproduction, and Distribution

Despite a major focus of attention and resources, the Department has barely kept pace with the growing need of schools and districts to receive current information. Although much work is being done to utilize emerging technologies to assist schools in accessing this information, printed documents will remain an important vehicle to distribute information for the foreseeable future.

Initiative # 66: ESE Internet Information Server

During the 1994-95 school year the Department established a full connection to the Internet and began publishing documents electronically. By the end of 1995, all relevant Department documents will be available through either the World Wide Web or Gopher. The Department's server has been developed in conjunction with the Mass EdOnline LearnNet [see Initiative #72].

Initiative # 67: Conference Coordination.

In order to increase the efficiency of administration of conference logistics, a central office will be established..

Initiative # 68: Advisory Councils to the Board of Education

In response to the tremendous changes called for by the Education Reform Act, the Board of Education and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education convened dozens of task forces, working groups, committees, and commissions. Among these groups were:

- Adult Basic Education Working Committee
- Adult Education Committee
- Advisory Commission on Adult Resource Ratios
- Assessment Advisory Committees (3)
- Charter School Advisory Council

- Child & Family Service Advisory Panel
- Commission on Regulatory Relief
- Commission on the Common Core of Learning
- Commission on Time and Learning
- Comprehensive Health Education Advisory Council
- Curriculum Framework Advisory Committees (7)
- Ed. Alternatives for Disruptive Students Study Group
- Education Reform Review Commission
- General Track Focus Group
- Governor's Commission on Bilingual Education
- Governor's Commission on Early Childhood Education
- Governor's Foundation Review Commission
- Mass EdOnline Steering Committee
- Massachusetts Education Reform Implementation Taskforce
- Network of Model School Councils
- Performance Standards for Educators Working Groups (3)
- Professional Development Working Group
- Recertification Focus Group
- School Safety Oversight Committee
- School Standards Taskforce
- Young Parent Outreach Demonstration Task Force

These groups played a critical role in shaping the early stages of the Reform implementation. In 1994, the Board appointed the fifteen more formalized advisory councils called for by the Reform Act in the following areas:

- Adult Basic Education
- Bilingual Education
- Comprehensive Interdisciplinary Health Education
- Early Childhood Education
- Educational Personnel
- Fine Arts Education
- Gifted and Talented Education
- Global Education
- Life Management Skills and Home Economics
- Math and Science Education
- Parent and Community Education And Involvement
- Racial Imbalance
- Special Education
- Technology Education
- Vocational-Technical Education

Over the next five years, the Department and Board will increasingly rely upon these advisory councils for statewide public input.

Line-Item 3: Executive Office of Education Operations

Initiative # 69

Under the leadership of Secretary of Education, Piedad F. Robertson, the Executive Office of Education represents Governor Weld to the Legislature, Board of Education and other important educational constituencies. The Executive Office assists the Department in implementing all its initiatives and takes a leadership role in coordinating the development of initiatives such as Attracting Excellence to Education [[see Initiative #10](#)], School Profiles [[see Initiative #21](#)], Dual Enrollment [[see Initiative #28](#)], School-to-Work [[see Initiative #29](#)] Charter Schools [[see Initiative #45](#)], Mass EdOnline [[see Initiative #70](#)], and School-Linked Services [[see Initiative #78](#)]

Line-Item 4: Mass Ed Online

Mass Ed Online is not a single initiative or technology. It is the name of a comprehensive plan for educational technology developed during the 1993-94 school year by the Executive Office of Education. During the 1994-95 school year, the Commonwealth implemented the first two major pieces of the Mass Ed Online plan: 1) upgrading the existing education network operated by Massachusetts Corporation for Educational Telecommunications (MCET) into a statewide client-server network with full access to the Internet, and 2) working with school districts to assist them in developing local technology plans.

Initiative # 70: Mass EdOnline Planning and Coordination

An interagency steering committee consisting of the agency heads of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Executive Office of Education, Higher Education Coordinating Council, MCET, and Office of Management of Information Services has been established to coordinate the implementation of Mass EdOnline. By the end of the 1994-95 school year the MEOL Steering Committee will file a major bond to finance critical statewide and local infrastructure improvements. MCET is charged by the Education Reform Act with the responsibility of leading the implementation of Mass Ed Online. This refined focus of its originally broad mission was clarified by an internal strategic planning process which clearly established MCET's basic mission as in services of Massachusetts K-12 schools.

Initiative # 71: Local Technology Planning and Support

Ultimately, the responsibility to plan for, fund, and make use of technology in schools is a local one. Nonetheless, there are several ways that the state can support school districts in integrating technologies into their schools: 1) the state will establish clear criteria and processes to approve districts' local technology plans; 2) the state will provide resources and expertise to assist in the development of local technology plans; 3) the state will seek state, federal, and private funds to support districts in implementing approved plans.

Initiative # 72: Statewide Information Network (Mass.Ed.OnLine LearnNet)

During the 1994-95 school year, an interagency working group worked with MCET to upgrade its existing network, the LearnNet, into a statewide client/server network with state funded access for 12,000 initial users. This initial pilot distribution of accounts provided full access to state resources and the Internet to all superintendents, district business managers, district technology directors, principals, school-based technology facilitator, and an additional teacher account for every 500 students per school.

Over the next few years MCET will work with cooperative agencies and school districts to expand access to the network by distributing the network through community-based servers. A pilot of 20 community servers will commence in FY'96 with the support of a grant from the US Department of Commerce. Additional communities will be brought on line as funds become available. Development of common platforms for community access to the network will bring full connectivity within reach of all districts and ensure equitable access by all schools. In addition to supporting districts' access, the state will continue to provide network services and work to decrease district telecommunication costs. Development of a statewide information network is essential to the success of many of the other initiatives in this Five Year Plan. Without a network, it would not be feasible to collect the student and school performance data [see Initiatives #2 and #20] that is at the core of the new system of accountability. In addition, the network will bring unprecedented information into the classroom for students learn with and will enable teachers to share best practices.

Initiative # 73: Satellite Video Broadcast (Mass LearnPike)

MCET's first major project was the creation of Mass LearnPike. The LearnPike was developed in conjunction with a federal Star Schools grants to explore the use of distance-learning in K-12 schools. The LearnPike uses satellite broadcast to provide semi-interactive video (1-way video/2-way audio), to deliver unique curriculum and professional development opportunities. The state's subsidy for district membership fees have resulted in over 250 school districts purchasing satellite dishes and accessing LearnPike programs. In future years, MCET will focus the majority of its programs on supporting the Department implementing the Curriculum Frameworks [see Initiative #1] and other initiatives through broadcast of relevant curricular programs and facilitating professional development. Digital compression and video conferencing will be used to expand MCET's programming and integrate video broadcasting with the Mass EdOnline LearnNet.

Initiative # 74: Educational Technology Evaluation and Procurement

One of the most important roles that the state can play in supporting schools' use of technology is to evaluate, recommend, and in some cases subsidize, technological resources. For years the Department has provided this service for video resources. Until the 1993-94 school year, the Department oversaw a program called Massachusetts Educational Television (MET). Through this program, Department staff worked with school personnel to review educational videos and buy rights to broadcast the best through WGBH, the Boston PBS affiliate. In 1993, the Department turned over the full management and responsibility for MET to WGBY, the Springfield PBS affiliate. Over the next few years, the Department will develop a more comprehensive approach to reviewing all educational technology resources including software, CD ROM, video conferencing, on-line services, and video.

Initiative # 75: ESE Information Management and Technology

[see initiative description in Line-Item 5.1]

Line-Item 5: Early Childhood Education

Initiative # 76

By the Year 2000, all eligible three and four year-old children in the Commonwealth will have access to high quality early childhood education. Realization of this objective is expected to be the single largest program to be initiated by the Education Reform Act, other than the Foundation Budget. The Governor's Commission on Early Childhood Education has been studying the scope of programs that would need to be coordinated and is in the process of developing a comprehensive plan which includes sliding scale of subsidies for poorer families.

Line-Item 6: Family and Adult Learning Network

A second critical network which the state will establish over the next five years is a human network of support and comprehensive services for parents. The importance of this work is well established. Considerable evidence suggests that parental support in general and parental literacy in specific may be the single most important factor in determining a student's educational success.

Initiative # 77: Family Support Network

The overarching structure for this support will be a comprehensive school-based network linking all school and community parental and family support services into a single coordinated system. Several models are currently being explored to pilot this system with full state-wide implementation scheduled for FY'99.

Initiative # 78: School-Linked Services

In many communities, an equally important link in the network may be the provision of human services to children and parents through school-based centers. The Education Reform Act calls for 3% of each human service agency budget towards school-based services. By locating these services in directly in schools, human service agencies have the potential of reaching students more effectively and linking parents with their children's education.

A pilot project initiated in FY'95 in 13 communities is investigating various models for possible expansion. Through this program, participating communities are asked to 1) form or identify a lead group to coordinate the work; 2) identify all human services that students and families are currently receiving; and 3) develop an action plan for delivering these services more efficiently and effectively. Based on the results of these pilots, a plan will be developed to combine the successful components into the comprehensive state Parent Outreach and Family Support Initiative.

Initiative # 79: Basic Education Services for Parents

One essential piece of this network is the adequate provision of Adult Basic Education (ABE) in the community. By some estimates, Massachusetts currently provides subsidized ABE programs to fewer than 5% of the adults in need of such services. While other state and local agencies may fund ABE services for specific segments of the population, most communities provide no such services. By linking ABE services as an essential component in the Family Support Network, the state will leverage the creation of a statewide infrastructure of ABE services so that allied agencies can fund additional slots.

Initiative # 80: Parent Information Centers

A final service in this network, to which all parents in the Commonwealth should avail themselves, is the access to information about the quality of education that their children are receiving. Schools must make themselves into welcoming environments for parents. They must invite parents to participate regularly in their children's education. And, they must share information about their schools successes and challenges.